“Leave no one behind”

Contributions from our Bridge Building activities to the UN Agenda 2030

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What is BB?

The European Centre set a special focus on (potential) EU candidate countries and the countries of the Eastern Partnership - the so-called Bridge Building countries (BB countries) to assist in improving social welfare policies.

Our ongoing activities:

- Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) and joint activities with our National Liaison Officials (NLOs)
- Unique EESPN network (Eastern European Social Policy Network)
- Project work (externally and internally funded)
BB contributions to the UN Agenda 2030

At territorial level:
We apply international, regional (transnational/cross-country), national and sub-national approaches in contributing to “leaving no one behind” when conducting research and advising policy makers.

At content level:
We focus on policies aiming at reducing poverty and promote wellbeing; thereby helping the most vulnerable groups of society, strengthening social support systems and building joint understanding on strong social policies.

At process level:
We assist in developing the reform agenda, support policy development and evaluation and facilitate joint learning and exchanges between countries to enable smooth transition towards a Social Europe.
Our approach

- Identifying needs across BB and EU countries
- Inclusive approaches & exchange at the same eye level
- Co-creation of innovative approaches
- Joint implementation of solutions in response to the needs
- Monitoring progress
- Development of recommendations
Identifying needs across BB and EU countries

- Often, BB and EU countries face similar challenges in adjusting their social and labour market systems to changes in how we work and live (digitalisation & automatisation processes, labour migration, demographic change, COVID-19, etc.)
- All countries face the need to develop socially innovative approaches to ensure sustainability of social support systems such as
  - Interventions at different governance levels (local, regional, national and international) to strengthen LTC systems
  - Integrated policy responses to help those most in need
- Reduce socio-economic inequality and protect vulnerable groups
Inclusive approaches & exchange at the same eye level

- Facilitate exchange/learning both within countries (between different stakeholders) and between countries
- Share knowledge and experience between different stakeholder groups (civil servants, NGOs, social partners, research, etc.)
- Learning between peers enables receiving practical information and hands-on experiences in implementing policy strategies & actions
- Mutual understanding is the basis for building trust between civil servants of different states and a precondition for successful knowledge exchange
Example: Exchange at the same eye level (Summer School 2021)

- 2 virtual summer schools
- Response to increased demand for the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of social policies
- **Capacity building** to enhance knowledge and share information on the state-of-the-art research and policy practice
- **Peer learning and mutual exchange** of experiences among participants
- **Fostering collaboration and developing ideas** for hands-on projects to contribute to strengthening evaluation
- Strengthening and expanding the Eastern European Social Policy Network (EESPN)
Co-creation of innovative approaches

- **Building consensus** and **stakeholder coalitions** are essential parts of innovation and reform processes, which often rely on the meaningful involvement of relevant stakeholders

**Example: InCARE project**

- Multi-stakeholder participatory approach within a Theory of Change framework
- Involvement of **service users & families** in service design and development (both directly or indirectly through data collection on preferences, attitudes and expectations)
- Involvement of **local organizations** in the design and implementation of service delivery pilots
- Involvement of **national stakeholders** in design and planning, with a focus on long-term sustainability and scale-up
Joint implementation of solutions in response to the needs

- Local ownership within a facilitating national policy framework and with technical support
- Setting up mutual learning labs for the exchange of knowledge and information among the participating sending and receiving countries in the frame of the posting of workers to improve transnational multi-stakeholder cooperation between public authorities, social partners and the research community
- Hands-on pilots that provide specific states with detailed recommendations for action as part of a strategy implementation plan or action plan and that builds on reflection during the joint peer reviews
- Joint project implementation frequently follows topic-related, target-group oriented and structure changing aims.
Monitoring progress

- Theory of Change framework (including both process & outcome evaluation) geared towards **scale-up and long-term sustainability** (InCARE)
- Ex-post system review, policy analysis and monitoring for the **Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents** (UNICEF Moldova)
- Monitoring progress regarding the **European Pillar of Social Rights** in the Western Balkan region – see example
Example: Monitoring progress (social indicators)

- Monitoring progress regarding the European Pillar of Social Rights in the Western Balkan region
- Economic and social upward convergence in the Western Balkan Region is important for social cohesion towards the EU
- Focus on risks COVID-19 pandemic has posed to the public health and systems
- Despite some progress in social indicators, welfare and labour market outcomes remain generally weak
- Need for ensuring access to social protection, education, and labour market
- Strengthen institutional capacities and monitoring practices
Developing recommendations

- Co-production of materials/tools to ensure relevance and understandability (including by publishing key materials in local languages)
- Targeted recommendations - summarizing lessons learned for a variety of audiences – e.g. policy roadmaps & briefs, short reports, information notes, academic articles)
- Tailor policy suggestions regarding strengthening social indicators to the country levels and regional levels, and jointly convene stakeholders from the European Commission and Western Balkan countries
- To strengthen the evidence-base between procedures (legal basis) and practices (experiences) in posting rule enactment
Conclusion

No one size fits all! ... but also... No need to reinvent the wheel!

Our work focuses on developing local capacity, co-producing and customizing solutions to local needs, encouraging local ownership and empowering our local partners to lead the way.

There is an equal need to dedicate effort and resources to the development of ‘best-fit’ policy solutions and the development of broad partnerships and ally networks that can support implementation.
Thank you very much for your attention!